

Hybrid Warfare Dilemmas in the Middle Colonies during the American Revolution

A Monograph

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Abstract

Hybrid Warfare Dilemmas in the Middle Colonies during the American Revolution, by MAJ William C. Murray II, US Army, 43 pages.

The hybrid war in the Middle Colonies during the American Revolution from 1776 – 1778 produced three dilemmas that the British could not solve, leading to American victory and independence. First, when the British spread out to provide local security across a wide area, the smaller formations became vulnerable to the enemy regular force. Next, when the British concentrated to fight the enemy regular force, it exposed the population and exposed the army to infiltration and attacks from enemy irregular forces. Finally, when the British focused on defeating both forces simultaneously, they lacked the resources to do so in either case.

Understanding the creation of a hybrid threat is important to the US Army because it expects to face hybrid threats in the future. The environment that produced the hybrid war, the creation of the dilemmas, and how the British Army attempted to solve these dilemmas highlight the complexity of hybrid warfare and provide insight into understanding, generating, and solving dilemmas in future wars.

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Introduction

Suppose a military force sent into America, they will find nobody in arms; what are they then to do? They cannot force a man to take stamps who chooses to do without them. They will not find a rebellion; they may indeed make one.

—Benjamin Franklin to the House of Commons, 1766

The hybrid war in the Middle Colonies during the American Revolution from 1776 – 1778 produced three dilemmas that the British could not solve, leading to American victory and independence. First when the British spread out to provide local security across a wide area, the smaller formations became vulnerable to the enemy regular force. Next, when the British concentrated to fight the enemy regular force, it exposed the population and exposed the Army to infiltration and attacks from enemy irregular forces. Finally, when the British focused on defeating both forces simultaneously, they lacked the resources to do so in either case. The environment that produced the hybrid war, the creation of the dilemmas, and how the British Army attempted to solve these dilemmas highlights the complexity of hybrid warfare and provides insights in generating and solving dilemmas in future wars.

Hybrid warfare allowed the Continental Army and colonial militias to use their strengths against the British Army's weaknesses.¹ The tailored mix of regular forces, the Continental Army, and irregular forces, the colonial militias, created a hybrid war in the Middle Colonies, but the forces were very different from one another in their use. At the start of the American Revolution, the regular force, the Continental Army, was an army in name only, with George Washington remarking later in his command, "Could I have foreseen what I have, and I'm likely

¹ Hybrid warfare is a form of warfare that simultaneously and adaptively employs a tailored mix of regular and irregular forces in the operational environment, creating multiple dilemmas to the opposing force. Definition presented at the US Joint Forces Command Hybrid War Conference, Washington, DC, February 4, 2009, accessed August 9, 2016, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/188-glenn.pdf>.

to experience, no considerations upon earth should have induced me to accept this command.”²

The colonial militias, on loan from the colonies, made up the majority of the Continental Army and formed a larger formation in its employment than the militias normally fought. This small Continental Army had many weaknesses that the larger British Army could exploit, but the Continental Army’s ability to mass quickly against smaller British forces when they were vulnerable gave them an advantage in number that they would not normally possess.

The Continental irregular force, made up of colonial militia, were the stronger of the two forces leading up to the war.³ In 1774, British General Lord Percy commented, “What makes an insurrection here always more formidable than other places, is that there is a law of this province, which obliges every inhabitant to be furnished with a firelock, bayonet, and pretty considerable quantity of ammunition.”⁴ The irregular force was well armed and dispersed across each colony to provide local security. This dispersion prevented the British Army from massing against a large colonial militia formation and allowed the colonial militias to attack the British from almost any direction. The colonial militia’s ability to force the British to disperse their formations to protect the population as well as their ability to attack those formations allowed the Continental Army to defeat smaller British formations. The supporting relationship between the Continental Army and the colonial militias created the dilemmas that would not have existed without the hybrid threat.

² Quoted in, Rupert Hughes, *George Washington, 1776-1777* (New York: William Morrow, 1930), 307. Regular forces are the regulated armed forces of a state or alliance of states with specified functions of military offensive and defensive capabilities in legitimate service to the state or alliance. Training Circular (TC) 7-100, *Hybrid Threat* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 2-2.

³ Irregular forces are armed individuals or groups who are not members of the regular armed forces, police, or internal security forces. Field Manual (FM) 1-02, *Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004), 1-105.

⁴ Quoted in, Matthew H. Spring, *With Zeal and with Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775-1783* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 15.

George Washington did not choose a hybrid war strategy because he recognized its potential to defeat the British Army, he utilized hybrid warfare out of necessity. While the British Army needed to secure the colonies in order to crush the rebellion, the Americans just needed to outlast the British.⁵ Hybrid warfare enabled the Continental Army to outlast the British's will to fight. When the war started, Washington wanted an entirely regular force. The colonies, on the other hand, wanted the Army to be mainly irregular forces utilized by the colonies to defend their territory, which may have left them vulnerable to a complete occupation by the British Army. The Continental Army and colonial militias used their complementing strengths to present multiple dilemmas through hybrid warfare that the British could not solve. Hybrid warfare was successful in the Middle Colonies because the proper conditions existed, namely opportunity, motive, and means. One cannot create a hybrid war by simply combining regular and irregular forces in mutually supporting roles; the opportunity, motive, and means must exist in conjunction with a regular force in order to present dilemmas to the enemy.⁶

As stated, war in the Middle Colonies created three dilemmas. The dilemmas are important to hybrid warfare because they compel the force attempting to defeat the hybrid threat to risk something it values, such as combat power, resources, or time.⁷ The creation of dilemmas involving both regular and irregular forces show that there are simultaneous events in their operations, reflecting a hybrid threat. The hybrid war dilemmas presented to the British Army during the American Revolution attacked British troop strengths, their limited resources, and prolonged the war as they attempted to solve the dilemmas.

⁵ David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 78.

⁶ Joint Publication (JP) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), II-3.

⁷ US Army Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet (TRADOC Pam) 525-3-1, *The US Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), iii.

Past Study

Previous historians and authors discussed the importance of hybrid warfare in the Middle Colonies during the American Revolution, but they failed to highlight the creation of the hybrid threat and the development of dilemmas it posed to the British. In Williamson Murray's *Hybrid Warfare*, he focused primarily on the British operational approach in defeating the regular and irregular forces and paired it with a lack of understanding the operational environment and the perils of attempting to control large areas with a small force.⁸ This framework helps in understanding the British actions in the Middle Colonies, but it fails to answer the questions of how did the hybrid threat form and why was it so effective. In Max Boot's *Invisible Armies*, two small chapters outline the composition and roles of the regular and irregular forces in the hybrid war in the Middle Colonies, indicating the impact these forces made on the war.⁹ This helps understand the impact of the dilemmas but fails to show how the regular and irregular forces presented the dilemmas. In *Washington's Crossing*, David Fischer gave an in-depth analysis of the operational environment from both the British and colonial points of view, along with a detailed campaign analysis of British actions in New York and New Jersey. Fischer never mentioned the dilemmas specifically, but he did discuss the interaction between regular and irregular forces. Fischer highlighted the importance of the irregular force to the colonial cause, but failed to discuss the creation of the dilemmas and how those dilemmas changed British strategy.

⁸ Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, eds. *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 73.

⁹ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Liveright, 2013), 64.

Why This Analysis Is Different and Relevant

Understanding the creation of a hybrid threat is important to the US Army because it currently faces and expects to face hybrid threats in the future.¹⁰ Though the term hybrid threat is relatively new, the use of irregular and regular forces in war are not. Recently, hybrid war was used to describe any action where there is a regular and irregular force on the battlefield. However, it is important to understand that the two must be working simultaneously with one another and their actions create a dilemma for the adversary. Though there are plenty of differences, the US Army can expect to be in a similar position that the British Army faced in fighting against the colonials. The US Army will be operating outside of its borders, given difficult objectives to achieve, and a short amount of time to achieve those objectives. How can the US Army understand the threat in that theater and impose multiple dilemmas against the enemy, while solving dilemmas that it is being presented?

The environment that produced the hybrid war, the creation of the dilemmas, and how the British Army attempted to solve these dilemmas highlight the complexity of hybrid warfare as well as provide insights into understanding, generating, and solving dilemmas in future wars. Not every environment has suitable conditions to create or sustain a hybrid war. Analyzing the opportunity, motive, and means for the irregular force to develop and then work in conjunction with the regular force in the Middle Colonies gives a framework to help understand the hybrid threat in other environments. These conditions did not occur overnight and were not driven from the top down. This environment led to the mutually supporting relationship between the Continental Army and colonial militias and the ability to force dilemmas on the British Army.

Creating and solving military dilemmas is important to the US Army because it is the central idea in the Army's operating concept, *Win in a Complex World*. The doctrine states that

¹⁰ TC-100, 1-2.

the Army as part of a Joint Force presents adversaries with multiple dilemmas to achieve sustainable outcomes.¹¹ How did an inexperienced army and militias create dilemmas that one of the most powerful nations in the world could not solve? Analyzing the British and colonial actions that took place prior to, during, and after the development of the dilemmas provides awareness to what caused the dilemma and what actions it forced each side to take. After analyzing the immediate effects of the dilemma, understanding the long-term problems the dilemmas created and how the British attempted to solve the dilemmas provides insight in how leaders solve dilemmas.

Environment in the Middle Colonies

Hybrid warfare thrived in the Middle Colonies of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware because the operational environment provided the opportunity, motive, and means for the regular force and the irregular force to develop and work together.¹² The same framework used to understand the environment that can create an insurgency can aid in understanding a hybrid threat. It is important to analyze the colonial congresses that governed the colonies prior to British occupation to understand the opportunity that allowed the hybrid threat to develop. The motive of the regular and irregular forces gave them the will to fight a much stronger army. The core grievances, identities, and ideology, as well as the leaders that developed the narrative behind these issues, bring light to why someone was willing to risk their life for the creation of a new republic. Opportunity and motive can only provide so much to developing the hybrid threat. Understanding the means—such as organization of people, funds, weapons, and communications and logistical systems—shows the complexity of resourcing a hybrid war. The environment is the most important element of a hybrid war. Without the proper opportunity, motive, and means, it is

¹¹ JP 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, vi.

¹² Ibid., II-3.

unlikely that the irregular force has the ability to materialize and similar conditions need to exist for both the regular and irregular forces to work with one another.

The Middle Colonies, made up of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware, possessed a unique opportunity to create a hybrid war during the American Revolution. The Middle Colonies were different from the New England and Southern Colonies because their economies were so interdependent, thus creating strong cooperation. New York City dominated the colony of New York and the Hudson River linked the colony to this important economic and trade center. Philadelphia and New York City were commercial hubs for the Middle Colonies and were also hubs for colonists loyal to British rule. New Jersey linked Pennsylvania and New York together, and towns between the two became important transit hubs for commerce.

Colonists in New Jersey established large farms in the west of the colony with smaller farms in the east. These lines would divide the colonists who did and did not support the revolution. The larger landowners in the west generally supported the British government because they felt that they had more to lose if ties severed.¹³ Over half of the colonists in New Jersey were of English origin, with the majority of non-English in the eastern part of the colony.¹⁴ Delaware relied heavily on Philadelphia as a hub to move its agricultural products, bringing its colonial government and Pennsylvania's close together.¹⁵ Colonists of English descent comprised the majority of the colony, but their wait-and-see approach to supporting the Revolution was more closely aligned with Pennsylvania than with the New Jersey or New York colonists who wanted to remain part of Great Britain.¹⁶ Hoping for reconciliation with Great Britain until the signing of

¹³ John Neuenschwander, *The Middle Colonies and the Coming of the American Revolution* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1974), 21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the Declaration of Independence, the Middle Colonies believed their economic livelihood relied on their relationship with Great Britain, and they were the last block of colonies to support the war.¹⁷

The economic bonds that connected these colonies became a catalyst for their governments to work together. The threat of war against Britain during the winter of 1774-1775 forced the colonial congresses to put their rivalries and disputes aside to negotiate a unified strategy with the other colonies.¹⁸ Since the Middle Colonies believed their future prosperity tied them directly to Britain, they were reluctant to follow the colonial union movement led by the New England colonies. The Loyalist representatives in the colonial governments, disparagingly known as Tories, pressed to isolate the troublesome New England Colonies, which actually strengthened regional unity.¹⁹

The Middle Colonies did not want to go to war against Britain, but they also did not want to detach themselves from the other colonies. In late 1775, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware became more closely aligned with their views of supporting independence from Britain. These colonies realized that if they questioned the independence movement, there was a possibility that even more radical factions of their governments might take control. With a large number of Loyalists in New York and with New York City as a certain objective in war with Britain, New Yorkers were less than enthused at the possibility of war.²⁰ Eventually, New York Whigs, colonials who wanted independence, sided with the other colonies, but they needed to be pulled into the war. The Middle Colonies worked closely with one another leading up to the war,

¹⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁸ Ibid., 78.

¹⁹ Ibid., 79.

²⁰ Ibid., 128.

allowing local governments to manage resources with one another before and after the war broke out.

The core grievances, identities, and ideologies, and leaders that developed the narratives behind these issues shaped the motive once the war started. However, the Middle Colonies were ripe with internal problems that would soon feed into motives for a hybrid war and help unite the populace. Land disputes were common in the area, with large landowners laying claim to old titles and newer farmers trying to carve out territory for themselves.²¹ The colonies themselves disputed their own borders, with New Jersey handing over 150,000 acres to New York in 1772 and Delaware splitting off from Pennsylvania at the turn of the century.²² Slaves and indentured servants worked on large farms, while smaller farms were tended by families and farm communities. The divide between the “haves” and “have-nots” in the region drove separation in the region during the war, with government officials, proprietors, large landowners, and merchants making up the bulk of the Loyalists in the region.²³ Though their governments learned to work with one another, the communities inside the Middle Colonies were divided, but not necessarily along Loyalist and independence views.

Loyalists in the Middle Colonies played a minor role in the American Revolution because they failed to spread British support prior to and during the war. The Loyalists in the Middle Colonies tended to live along the New Jersey coast, in southern New Jersey, around the older counties of Pennsylvania and the peninsula between Delaware and the Chesapeake Bay.²⁴ There were also a large number of Loyalists along the Pennsylvania frontier because they needed

²¹ Leonard Lundin, *Cockpit of the Revolution: The War for Independence in New Jersey* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 62.

²² Neuenschwander, *The Middle Colonies and the Coming of the American Revolution*, 52.

²³ Lundin, *Cockpit of the Revolution*, 85.

²⁴ William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 87.

protection of the British government.²⁵ The British estimated that between two-thirds to four-fifths of the colonial population were Loyalists, however, the number was closer to one-fifth of the population.²⁶ Their motives were similar, but their core grievance for supporting British rule differed, preventing them from being a true threat to the Revolution.²⁷ The majority of the population rested in the middle and wanted nothing to do with the war. The British Army's failure to secure, support, and empower the Loyalists in the Middle Colonies before and during the war prevented Loyalist sympathy from spreading. Only the British could provide the leadership, supplies, and purpose that the Loyalists needed to fight their rebellious countrymen.²⁸

The Whig leadership in the Middle Colonies was more than willing to drown out the weak Tory leadership in the region. The Whigs in the Middle Colonies became more emboldened as the colonies edged closer to war. In the summer of 1776, colonial governments began pushing any Tories out of their governments by requiring officials to swear an oath of allegiance to the new government and severing any allegiances to British rule.²⁹ William Livingston, Governor and General of the New Jersey Militia, recognized the Loyalist sentiment in Monmouth County and called on support from Pennsylvania to suppress the Loyalist activity in the area.³⁰ In July 1776, four hundred militiamen moved into the county to quash the local unrest and prevent dissidence from spreading. The Loyalists were too dispersed over the colonies to secure themselves and then realized that there was little support for their cause. The Loyalists would need to remain quiet without British support. Grievances started to rise to the surface in the

²⁵ Nelson, *The American Tory*, 87.

²⁶ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 160.

²⁷ Nelson, *The American Tory*, 115.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

²⁹ Lundin, *Cockpit of the American Revolution*, 120.

³⁰ Mark V. Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996), 57.

summer of 1776, and the British occupation of New Jersey only exacerbated the situation that winter.

The Middle Colonies had the means for hybrid war to take root because they had the personnel, weapons, social networks, and systems for logistics and communications.³¹ Though the relationship between the Middle Colonies and the Commander-in-Chief was far from perfect from either party's point of view, each understood that the militia was charged with local security while the Continental Army dealt with the main British force. The expansion of the militias during the French and Indian War had contributed to colonial lawmakers' appreciation of the force. The roles and responsibilities that the colonial governments developed during the French and Indian War had laid the groundwork for the recruitment, logistic, and communications systems that enabled the hybrid war during the revolution.

The colonial governments controlled every aspect of the militias, from recruiting and supplying them to their employment in battle. The militias' most important role during the war was serving as the local armed constabulary force to control the populace.³² The colonial militias, which protected the populace from the regular threat of Indian attacks, posed the biggest challenge in attempting to restore British order because the majority of white males in the colonies had access to modern firearms and military training.³³ Every township in the colonies also contained a large magazine for military weapons and supplies, and the militias trained together four times a year. As early as June 1775, colonial congresses drafted plans to form larger militias and issued a call for all the people to arms themselves and prepare to defend their

³¹ JP 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, II-7.

³² Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only*, 16.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14.

liberty.³⁴ Understanding that the militia needed local initiative, the state congress ordered the militia to assemble at officers' homes in case of alarm or invasion.

The complementary relationship between the Continental Army and the colonial militias made the American Revolution a hybrid war, but the relationship between the two was anything but simple. Congress gave George Washington the title of Commander-in-Chief, but Washington needed permission from the colonial governments to use the militias. Washington divided his army into clear lines, the Continental Army, which received orders directly from him, and the militias, which he worked through the local government to issue orders and sustain in the field. Washington understood that he needed to protect the local governments and the people to convince the country that the army was meeting its needs. Washington realized the uniqueness of this military relationship, stating, "Militia, independent of other troops... [were] more than competent to all purposes of defensive war."³⁵ Washington concentrated his Continental Army on national defense while the militias remained focused on their local needs. This flexibility was the foundation of the hybrid threat that plagued the British Army in New Jersey and Philadelphia from 1776-1777.

The French and Indian War had laid the groundwork for the colonies to create stronger social networks and systems. This opportunity strengthened local governments, allowed the colonies to exercise military recruitment and sustainment, and gave the colonies a higher degree of command and control of their militias as part of a larger effort. The war allowed the colonies to begin working with one another to solve problems of defense, expansion, territorial disputes, and logistics.³⁶ The colonies had a large degree of latitude in solving these problems because the

³⁴ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 7.

³⁵ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 62.

³⁶ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 230.

Crown concentrated on the overall war effort and stayed out of many colonial issues. A large number of men in their prime served in the British Army during the French and Indian War, giving them experience in waging war that cannot be learned in a book.³⁷ These systems and experience allowed the Middle Colonies to work closely with their fellow colonies, their Continental Congress, and Washington in preparing for and waging war.

The opportunity, motives, and means that allowed the hybrid threat to take shape in the Middle Colonies were complicated, and the elements that made up the environment were interconnected in many ways. It may be easy to view the hybrid war in the Middle Colonies as an accident, but the conditions that enabled the regular and irregular forces to work together were established for a purpose. The French and Indian War and preparation for the British invasion were critical times in the Middle Colonies that laid the groundwork for a successful hybrid war. The colonial governments developed a mutually supporting relationship with General Washington and established the basis of their defense plan. Though Washington needed to learn how to best employ the militias in support of the Continental Army, he did understand the militias' role in local security. The colonial governments directed the defense of their colonies with little participation from the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, allowing the Continental government to coordinate the overall war effort.

Dilemma 1 – Balancing the Components of Operational Reach

The events and decisions that created the first dilemma began to unfold when the British crossed the Raritan River in New Jersey on December 6, 1776, when the British spread out their force to provide local security, these smaller formations became vulnerable to the enemy irregular and regular forces,³⁸ After defeating the Continental Army in New York City and learning that

³⁷ Ibid., 288.

³⁸ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 90.

the militias were irrelevant in assisting the Continental Army, Gen. William Howe believed that the Continental Army no longer had the ability to fight.³⁹ Howe later testified to the House of Commons in 1778 that, “My first design extending no further than to get and keep possession of East Jersey but finding the advantages that might be gained by pushing on to the Delaware, and the possibility of getting to Philadelphia, the communication leading to Brunswick was reinforced.”⁴⁰ Howe also testified that protecting the people was his main objective.⁴¹ Howe decided to move into and occupy western New Jersey because he viewed it as an opportunity to capture another colony before the end of the campaign season, spread out his forces to both secure the populace and forage off the land, and place his force in a better position to take Philadelphia in the spring.

Howe’s lines of operation and line of effort for New Jersey were focused on pushing the Continental Army out of eastern New Jersey without a decisive battle, dispersing his Army into small bases to sustain themselves, and then pacifying and protecting the New Jersey colonials. Howe decided to use the last month of the 1776 campaign season to move the navy to Rhode Island to take advantage of the warmer harbor, resupply off of farmland, and bring another colony under British control. A second campaign would occupy the eastern counties of New Jersey as quickly as possible in order to resupply off of the rich farmland there.⁴² As long as the populace submitted and the Continental Army failed to mass against any British unit, the plan put the British Army in position for continued victories in 1777.

³⁹ Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 161.

⁴⁰ Quoted in, Troyer Anderson, *The Command of the Howe Brothers During the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), 204.

⁴¹ Kwansy, *Washington’s Partisan War*, 91.

⁴² Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 116.

Howe understood that his Army's endurance limited his operational reach, so he planned his pursuit of the Continental Army in New Jersey accordingly in limited scope. Gen. Charles Lord Cornwallis, in charge of the pursuit, later testified to the House of Commons that the fatigue of his troops and lack of supplies prevented him from a rigorous pursuit of the Continental Army.⁴³ Howe no longer wanted the decisive action that he hoped for in New York because he feared that even in victory, his Army could not build the endurance needed for the next campaign. Cornwallis continued to methodically push the Continental Army southwest across New Jersey from November 19 through December 8, 1776, when his forces stopped their advance on the New Jersey side of the Delaware River on the heels of rebels. Howe originally wanted to keep his Army in eastern New Jersey in order to better control his forces in the known loyal regions of the state.⁴⁴ Cornwallis's tactical success and Howe's belief that the army had subdued all of New Jersey, encouraged him to move further west. With his army extended to the western boundaries of New Jersey, and wanting to pacify as much of the population as possible, Howe established a line of bases to provide space for the units to forage, protect and pacify the populace, and prevent a Continental Army attack into New Jersey.

Once again, Howe attempted to balance endurance, momentum, and protection to fit his strategy and lines of operation and effort.⁴⁵ When the Continental Army crossed the Delaware River to Pennsylvania, they took all of the boats on the New Jersey side of the river with them with help from the Pennsylvania militia and navy.⁴⁶ Howe had no intention of crossing the Delaware in 1776, knowing his forces were overextended.⁴⁷ At that point, Howe's army reached

⁴³ Alfred H. Bill, *The Campaign of Princeton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1948), 10.

⁴⁴ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 90.

⁴⁵ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 188.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

its culmination point because it no longer possessed the capability to continue its pursuit of the enemy.⁴⁸ Howe needed to base his army in order to protect the populace and sustain itself. Howe dispersed his Army into small garrisons across three hundred square miles of New Jersey, with each garrison ordered to maintain small outposts and send patrols out into the countryside. That area was less than 5 percent of the continent but stretched the British Army to its limit.

After defeat at the New York campaign, Washington realized that the war moved into a new phase which required him to develop a new strategy. Understanding his army's shortcomings, Washington concluded, "On our side, the war should be defensive. It can even be called a war of posts. We should on all occasions avoid a general action, and put nothing to risk. When the fate of America may be at stake in the issue; when the wisdom of cooler moments and experienced men have decided that we should protract the war if possible; I cannot think safe or wise to adopt a different system."⁴⁹ Realizing that he could not stop a British advance through New Jersey, Washington aimed to build his depleted army in Pennsylvania and then retake New Jersey.

Washington could not risk losing New Jersey for good because it risked cutting off his use of the militias in the colony as well as roads to move between the colonies. Washington also feared that the people may change their allegiance to support the British.⁵⁰ Washington planned to move through New Jersey and bolster his Army of just over four thousand soldiers with the New Jersey and Pennsylvania militias as well as Gen. Charles Lee's army coming from the north.⁵¹ Washington urged Lee "to push for Philadelphia. The force I have with me is infinitely

⁴⁸ Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP 3-0), *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 4-8.

⁴⁹ Quoted in, Ira D. Gruber, "The Origins of British Strategy in the War for American Independence" (paper presented at the Sixth Military History Symposium, Colorado Springs, CO, October 10-11, 1974), 57.

⁵⁰ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 93.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

inferior in numbers...I must entreat you to hasten your march.”⁵² Washington continued to retreat deeper into New Jersey with the British close on his heels, but the militias were not joining his force. Washington wrote to his cousin Lund about the militias stating, “A large part of the New Jerseys have given proof of disaffection that they can do, and this part of Pennsylvania are equally inimical. In short, your imagination can scare extend to a situation more distressing than mine.”⁵³ Though Washington was furious that the states and their militias failed to support his army, he understood that the militiamen stayed in their communities to protect their families and neighbors from the British advance. The states’ governments moved almost daily to avoid capture and could not force men to serve away from their families.⁵⁴ Washington needed to develop a plan to use the limited militia forces to support his small army.

Once the British occupied New Jersey, the environment began to change, creating the conditions for the regular and irregular colonial forces to support one another. The opportunity for the hybrid threat arose because the British could not control the colony. The motive for the majority of people of New Jersey who did not want to be involved in the war changed drastically after the British and German mercenaries treated them like criminals upon occupying the colony. Benjamin Franklin’s stated before the war that, “Suppose a military force [was] sent into America, they will find nobody in arms; what are they then to do? They cannot force a man to take stamps who chooses to do without them. They will not find a rebellion; they may indeed make one.”⁵⁵ The means for hybrid war were the same means that existed before and during the

⁵² Quoted in, Rupert Hughes, *George Washington 1776-1777* (New York: William Morrow, 1930), 542.

⁵³ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 545.

⁵⁴ Kwasny, *Washington’s Partisan War*, 89.

⁵⁵ Quoted in, William Jennings Bryan, *The World’s Famous Orations* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906), accessed November 17, 2016, <http://www.bartleby.com/268/8/10.html>.

preparation for the war. The militias still occupied the colony, they just remained relatively inactive during the initial occupation, lulling the British into a false sense of security.

Howe created the opportunity when he spread out his forces. Howe and his generals thought that two-thirds to four-fifths of the local population were loyal to the Crown and planned their operations off of that assumption.⁵⁶ Believing that the Continental Army posed no threat to his forces and that he was protecting a loyal population, Howe decided that he could safely spread his forces across New Jersey to both protect and pacify the people.⁵⁷ There were many gaps in the three hundred square miles of New Jersey that Howe planned to control with six bridges commanded by General Cornwallis.⁵⁸ These gaps created ungoverned spaces with little to no oversight from the British occupiers. Even though many of the local government leaders were on the run, many colonials stayed in their towns, enabling the networks that existed before the war to stay intact. With his Army attempting to sustain themselves off of the land, Howe issued a proclamation on November 30, 1776 that offered amnesty to anyone who returned to the Crown. This proclamation supported Howe's original strategy to bring the colonists under British rule peacefully, but it also supported Howe's hope that he could secure the populace with a limited number of soldiers. While moving into New Jersey, Howe gave strict guidance to his Army to supply themselves with food and fuel by foraging and paying the local farmers for supplies.⁵⁹ Foraging soon gave way to rampant plundering.

The colonials' motive to fight their occupiers stemmed in large part from how the British and Germans treated the colonials. In New Jersey, foraging almost completely disappeared and the Hessians were known as the worst plunderers of all. With most of these soldiers coming from

⁵⁶ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 160.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁸ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 891.

⁵⁹ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 173.

central Europe, where plundering was expected in war, the Hessian carted off a few hundred wagons of plunder from the citizens of New Jersey.⁶⁰ Lt. Charles Peale of the Continental Army recalled that “the Hessians had taken every shirt he had, except the one on his back; which has been their general practice wherever they have been. They have taken hogs, sheep, horses, and cows, everywhere; even children have been stripped of their clothes in which business the Hessian women are the most active.”⁶¹ George Washington even received reports of rapes by British soldiers and judicial inquiries confirmed that they occurred on a large scale with girls as young as ten being the victims.⁶² The citizens of New Jersey were neither pro-rebellion nor pro-British rule before the occupation, but many joined the rebellion after.

Howe’s amnesty program could not work if he was unable to protect the populace from his own Army. Howe failed to understand that the plundering changed the narrative that his army was there to protect the populace. The British Army could not be everywhere at once; Howe could no longer balance the protection of his force and building his endurance with lost momentum due to his Army in static positions. His army was seen as the aggressor in the conflict, which prevented the people of New Jersey from living their lives peacefully. In responding to his strategy in the Middle Colonies Howe stated that “at the time that there were large numbers of Loyalists in the area, and that they could not fail to notice the difference between British and rebel authority.”⁶³ The failure or inability of the British to support the Loyalists and the Loyalists to support the British was a reoccurring theme.

⁶⁰ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 174.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 178.

⁶³ Quoted in, David Smith, *William Howe and the American War of Independence* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 105.

Once Washington retreated from New Jersey, he had no choice but to rely on the militia to harass the British Army lines of communication, provide intelligence on the British Army's movements, and isolate the British Loyalists.⁶⁴ Under orders from Washington, groups from New Jersey and New York militias attacked the British lines of communication in eastern New Jersey during mid-December 1776, capturing twenty prisoners and forcing the British to reinforce an area they thought they controlled.⁶⁵ These militia groups grew larger and more emboldened after they witnessed how their families and fellow colonists were treated by British hospitality.⁶⁶ On December 17, 1776, members of the Pennsylvania militia led a raid across the Delaware River at Trenton under orders from Washington to "spare no pains, every piece of information worthy of communication transmits to me without loss of time."⁶⁷ With artillery support, thirty men attacked the Hessian outpost before retiring to the far side of the river. These attacks continued for weeks leading up to the First Battle of Trenton, with the Hessian suffering few casualties, but losing sleep and confidence in the process.⁶⁸

Howe's small garrisons lacked the ability to protect themselves and never anticipated an enemy attack in force: Howe's Army barely had the operational reach for protecting and pacifying the populace. Washington's orders to militias to report on British locations and harass bases of operations provided him with the understanding that the British were overstretched. The irregular force gave Washington the opportunity he so desperately needed, with Washington stating, "Now is the time to clip their wing, while they are so spread."⁶⁹ Until the end of

⁶⁴ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 80.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁶⁷ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 195.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁶⁹ Quoted in, Bill, *The Campaign of Princeton*, 27.

December 1776, Howe had believed that the war was all but over. With his army positioned on the eastern bank of the Delaware River, he planned to take Philadelphia in 1777 and hopefully end the war.⁷⁰ His army, however, was in a much different position. In late December 1776, a group of Pennsylvania and New Jersey militia conducted a raid into New Jersey, forcing Col. Carl von Donop to personally take a British and Hessian force to Mount Holly on December 23, 1776, in an attempt to defeat the militia.⁷¹ This prevented the Hessian commander from supporting his garrison at Trenton the following night, leading to an American victory. Though George Washington did not coordinate the raid to take part in support of his attack, the militia acted under his policy to harass the enemy's lines of communication.⁷²

Again, the British were unable to balance endurance, momentum, and protection. On Christmas night 1776, Washington made a bold move, crossing the Delaware River at night and during a storm, to attack the Hessian mercenary garrison at Trenton. The Hessians were exhausted in the weeks leading up to the attack. Ambushes against foraging patrols along with intelligence reports of an imminent rebel attack brought the Hessians to their breaking point. The Hessian commander, von Donop, wanted to concentrate his forces at Trenton during the weeks leading to the battle, but Gen. James Grant, the commander of forces in New Jersey, dismissed Col. Donop's pleas. With only one of the axis of advance making it to their objective, Washington defeated the Hessian regiment at Trenton in an hour and forty-five minutes. Realizing that Howe could not sustain his own operational reach, Washington retreated across the Delaware River with his first victory as commander and the momentum the Continental Army needed.

⁷⁰ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 97.

⁷¹ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 99.

⁷² Ibid.

The British Army lost its momentum after the first attack on Trenton, but General Cornwallis, the newly appointed commander of the British Army in New Jersey, believed he could get it back with a decisive battle that the British Army had avoided up until that point of the campaign. Learning that the Continental Army had crossed the Delaware River again and occupied Trenton, Cornwallis planned to march his force, consisting of 8,000 soldiers, out of their base in Princeton, New Jersey, down one axis of advance along the Main Post Road directly toward the defending Continental Army.⁷³ Cornwallis would extend his force fifteen miles from their base of operations in Princeton and leave a garrison of around 1,200 soldiers. On January 2, 1777, Cornwallis's force left Princeton with the intent to defeat a rebel force that got lucky against a lightly-defended Hessian force. The column became bogged down with four minor skirmishes that slowed down its momentum in the attack. The British Army reached Trenton in the late afternoon and became decisively engaged with a tougher and more aggressive Continental Army than they saw in New York. The British failed three times to take Assunpink Bridge in Trenton in order to reach the Continental Army, and the British waited in their position for a fight at daybreak.⁷⁴ While the British waited, the Continental Army took advantage of the British overreach by marching fifteen miles at night, in the cold, and along narrow roads to conduct a surprise attack on the British garrison in Princeton on January 3. The Continental Army routed 1,200 British soldiers with 4,500 soldiers, giving George Washington his third victory in ten days.⁷⁵

Howe risked his most valuable asset, his army, when he positioned his forces across New Jersey. The small raids and ambushes that started once the British occupied New Jersey reinforced the idea that the Continental Army posed no threat. This presented Washington with

⁷³ Ibid., 292.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 302.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 322.

the opportunity to attack. Once the Continental Army struck, Howe had to rethink his strategy for New Jersey and the war. Howe believed that New Jersey submitted and that there was no threat of any Continental force attacking his bases.⁷⁶ The immediate reaction to the first attack on Trenton caused two successive failures for the British Army. Howe had to develop a plan to protect his army while also allowing them to sustain themselves off of the colony and attempting to protect as much of the population as possible

The militias' actions in New Jersey continued to intensify as the British and German soldiers continued to plunder, harass, and attack the civilian population throughout the winter of 1777. Public reaction to these events brought more soldiers into the continental Army and militias. The complementary relationship between the Continental Army and the colonial militias allowed George Washington to take advantage of the British Army's over-reach. Disappointed in his army and the militias' action until this point, Washington now had the ability to pose a dilemma to the enemy, when the British spread out its force to provide local security, these smaller formations became vulnerable to the enemy regular force because they focused on the irregular force.

Dilemma 2 – Managing Operational Reach

Howe now faced the second dilemma, when the British attempted to fight the Continental regular force, an exposed population and Army risked infiltration and attacks from militia irregular forces. On 20 January 1776, Howe changed his strategy from dividing the colonies along the Hudson River to a campaign to move up the Delaware River to Pennsylvania in order to gain Loyalist support and take Philadelphia.⁷⁷ Just a few weeks after Howe believed that the 1776 campaign was over, the British Army suffered humiliating defeats at Trenton and Princeton,

⁷⁶ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 91.

⁷⁷ Anderson, *The Command of the Howe Brothers*, 213.

forcing him to change his original strategy.⁷⁸ From 27 August 1776 to 8 January 1777, Howe lost around ten-thousand soldiers from actions in New York and New Jersey, going from 24,464 to 14,000 soldiers fit for duty in the span of five months.⁷⁹ Howe needed to conserve his force.

Howe changed his strategy in reaction to the first dilemma, which perpetuated the second dilemma. Howe needed to pull back his forces from the edges of New Jersey to protect them from further attacks and allow them to rest and refit for the 1777 campaign season.⁸⁰ Understanding that that holding New Jersey required a larger force than he had, he decided to capture Philadelphia with a naval assault versus a land assault. This seemed to solve his dilemma of occupying large areas of land that he could not control and capture the colonial capital. Howe now faced the problem of positioning his forces to defend themselves against a Continental Army and militia attack, while protecting and pacifying the populace and rebuilding endurance for the 1777 campaign. Howe no longer had the forces he needed to isolate New England from the Middle Colonies due to the increasing threat from the combined Continental Army and militia forces.⁸¹ Howe petitioned his government in the fall for additional fifteen thousand soldiers, realizing that any ground he occupied needed to be controlled by his soldiers.⁸² This request was out of the question for a government that needed to get out of the war quickly to prevent its debt from growing even higher. Howe's letter to Lord George Germain in April 1777 reflects his thoughts on his new strategy. "From the difficulties and delay that would attend the passage of the River by a march through Jersey," he wrote, "I propose to invade Pennsylvania by sea, and from this arrangement must probably abandon the Jerseys which by the former plan would not be

⁷⁸ Smith, *William Howe and the American War of Independence*, 113.

⁷⁹ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 91.

⁸⁰ Anderson, *The Command of the Howe Brothers*, 230.

⁸¹ Smith, *William Howe and the American War of Independence*, 111.

⁸² Anderson, *The Command of the Howe Brothers*, 215.

the case.”⁸³ Howe’s new strategy matched what he viewed as his limited means, but he needed to abandon New Jersey and the Loyalists that were once his priority.

While General Howe crafted a new strategy based on his failures, General Washington needed a new strategy based on his change in fortune on the battlefield. Washington was in a difficult position. The British reeled from the losses at Trenton and Princeton, but Washington’s army did not have the numbers to conduct the type of offensive that he believed would push the British out of New Jersey. Washington needed time to build his army before conducting further offensive operations and counter Howe’s future plans. Washington believed that Howe would attempt to capture Philadelphia and sail up the Hudson to control the main line of communication between the New England and the other colonies. Washington wrote of his plan to conserve his army, stating, “would not suffer a man to stir beyond their lines, nor suffer them to have the least intercourse with the country.”⁸⁴ Washington would hold tight in Morristown, New Jersey, build his army, and wait for Howe to make the first move. Luckily, Washington could count on the militia to keep the British on the ropes in New Jersey and prevent them from resting.

With the Continental Army rebuilding, the militias in the Middle Colonies picked up where the victories at Trenton and Princeton left off. Washington issued orders for the militias to expose British posts and foraging parties, raid enemy supplies, and cut off communication between the enemy and the country.⁸⁵ The militias forced the British to forage in greater numbers, making them vulnerable to an attack from the Continental Army. Realizing the vulnerability of the enemy, Alexander Hamilton wrote to a fellow commander about the militia, that they were “of great service in the general scale, as they serve to harass and distress the enemy, and, by keeping them from forage, will put them under difficulties as to the transportation of their

⁸³ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 223.

⁸⁴ Quoted in, Kwasny, *Washington’s Partisan War*, 113.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

baggage and cannon whenever they think of making any capital movement.”⁸⁶ While the Continental Army posed no threat to the British Army, the militias prevented the British from getting the rest they needed before starting their next campaign. Though the British were able to refit, the constant harassment took its toll on British morale.⁸⁷

The conditions for the hybrid threat to take on a new shape and threat soon posed a new dilemma. The environment started to transform when the British occupied New Jersey and continued to transform when the British began to withdraw from the colony. Retreating from New Jersey gave the colonial militias the opportunity to take charge of areas the British once occupied, including Loyalist regions and communities that swore allegiance to the crown. The people’s motive in the Middle Colonies to fight the British continued. Colonial victories, along with Thomas Paine’s recently published *The American Crisis* only compounded the resentment that the colonials held for the British in the Middle Colonies.⁸⁸ The opportunity and motive played a direct role in the means to wage the hybrid war in the Middle Colonies after the British defeats. Over twelve thousand militiamen responded to the need for larger and more active militias.⁸⁹ While the Continental Army rebuilding, it still posed a significant threat to the British posts since it just defeated the British three times in the span of a week.

As the British evacuated from the western border of New Jersey on 6 January 1777, the irregular forces found the opportunity they needed.⁹⁰ The British could not secure the expanse of territory they currently occupied in New Jersey without risking future battles like Trenton and Princeton. Howe quickly reorganized his forces and pulled back his posts to the eastern borders of

⁸⁶ Quoted in, Douglas Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, vol. 4, *Leader of the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 383.

⁸⁷ Kwasny, *Washington’s Partisan War*, 126.

⁸⁸ Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 140.

⁸⁹ Kwasny, *Washington’s Partisan War*, 109.

⁹⁰ Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 346.

New Jersey around closer to New York, in an attempt to bring his units into more mutually supporting locations, shorten his lines of communication, and prevent any future Continental Army attacks.⁹¹ The British still faced many of the same problems in eastern New Jersey that they faced in western New Jersey. The soldiers still needed to rest and refit for the upcoming campaign in the spring, forage for supplies, and protect the population around their posts to prevent irregular forces from infiltrating into the populace. By abandoning New Jersey, the British left the Loyalists to fend for themselves.

The motive for the colonials throughout the colonies increased after the colonial victories at Trenton and Princeton. Once a lost cause, the Revolution survived after the British had defeated the Continental Army on multiple occasions in New York and after the British had pushed the Continental Army out of New Jersey. The colonials in the Middle Colonies witnessed British and German soldier cruelty firsthand. The colonials were not just fighting for the idea of independence, they fought for their families' survival and future.

Shortly before Washington's recent victories, Thomas Paine published *The American Crisis*, which fueled resentment and increased the motive to fight. Paine, a war correspondent and aide-de-camp to Gen. Nathanael Greene, wrote *The American Crisis* to stir emotion in the common colonial man toward freedom and action. With colonial enlistments running out and soldiers fleeing the army in droves, *The American Crisis* became the new narrative for the colonies. Starting off with the line, "These are the times that try men's souls" and stating, "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered," *The American Crisis* became widely read by both the colonials and British.⁹² The pamphlet, along with the recent victories and resentment toward their British and German occupiers, gave the colonials greater motives to fight.

⁹¹ Ibid., 347.

⁹² Quoted in, Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 142.

When the British attempted to position themselves to fight the enemy regular force, the exposed population and Army risked infiltration and attacks from enemy irregular forces. The Continental Army victories at Trenton and Princeton forced the British to retreat from their western posts in New Jersey. By spreading out their forces to protect the populace in late 1776, the British Army was vulnerable to an attack from the regular force, and the Continental Army took advantage of that opportunity. The British reaction to the first dilemma allowed the regular force to support the irregular forces action through the threat of continued attacks. The irregular forces quickly moved into the areas the British abandoned and pressed the British in their new posts. Formerly valuing the populace in his decision making, Howe was willing to present the populace to the enemy in order to protect his force first and foremost. Without the additional fifteen thousand soldiers that he requested, he believed that he had no other options. Howe's plan to position his forces to deal with a possible enemy attack led directly to the second dilemma because he focused on the Continental Army, and not the irregular force or colonial population.

Howe's decision to consolidate his forces in eastern New Jersey showed that he understood his lack of operational reach. He still worried that another Trenton or Princeton could occur on the newly consolidated British defensive line. A German chaplain wrote about his unit's ordeal in the colonies stating, "One can longer lie down to sleep without thinking this is the last night, the last night of freedom. Instead of undressing in the evening, as usual, one becomes accustomed to dress completely, and to go to bed in this manner."⁹³ These precautions show that the British did not have the opportunity to rest and recover from the previous campaign season and that the chances of being ready for the next season seemed grim. The Continental Army was disorganized and preparing for the upcoming campaign season as well, but it posed little threat to the British posts, but fortunately for Washington, the British did not know that.⁹⁴ Washington

⁹³ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 346.

⁹⁴ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 113.

realized that this was a temporary pause for his regular forces in the bigger scheme of the defending the colonies, and he needed this time to rebuild his force. The irregular actions gave that time because they kept the British Army occupied trying to survive the winter.

The irregular forces in the Middle Colonies used the Continental Army's recent victories and British withdrawal from western New Jersey as a springboard for increased attacks. For weeks after the battles in New Jersey, a mixture of militias and Continental Army detachments fought the British as they moved to the east. When the irregular forces killed a British captain, Howe commented, "Some lurking villains who murdered him in a most barbarous manner, which is a mode of war the enemy seem from several late instances to have adopted with a degree of barbarity that savages could not exceed."⁹⁵ These attacks continued through the winter, and though Washington called for further militia action in the Middle Colonies, he could not control the violence that erupted. When Cornwallis asked for safe passage through New Jersey to get supplies to British prisoners, Washington told him that he could not "answer for the militia who are resorting to Arms in most parts of the State, and exceedingly exasperated at the Treatment they have met with, from both Hessian and British Troop[s]."⁹⁶ Pennsylvania and the Delaware sent groups of militia into New Jersey and New York to keep the pressure on the British even though their colonies were out of the immediate fight.⁹⁷

The irregular force took over from where the regular force left off, and the British faced an even more difficult winter. Howe vacated a large area of New Jersey when he retired toward New York in the winter of 1777, leaving behind some 4,836 colonists who swore allegiance to the king when the British occupied their communities.⁹⁸ Washington forced anyone who swore an

⁹⁵ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 106.

⁹⁶ Quoted in, *ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁹⁸ Ira Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 195.

oath to the king to renounce their pledge and swear allegiance to the United States or be considered an enemy.⁹⁹ Howe's reconciliation was in vain. If anything, his efforts only identified colonists as possible Loyalists for the irregular force to deal with once they regained control. The irregular force took complete control of the region, forcing any Loyalists to submit or flee to areas the British still controlled in New York. The Loyalists felt betrayed by the British after they had risked their lives to support them prior to and throughout the 1776 campaign. Howe expected other Loyalists to support the British cause after he showed that he was so willing to abandon the Loyalists in New Jersey. Howe planned on using Loyalists in Pennsylvania as the provincial troop for the defense of Philadelphia once he captured it, but who would show up?¹⁰⁰

After the complete evacuation of New Jersey, the New Jersey militia took their civil war with the Loyalists in the eastern part of the state to a new level. Governor Livingston spoke of the fight against the Loyalists in fall of 1777 stating, "A Tory is an incorrigible Animal: And nothing but the extinction of Life, will extinguish his Malevolence against Liberty."¹⁰¹ Some Loyalists even switched sides with a correspondent from Pennsylvania writing, "many of the inhabitants of Monmouth County who received written protections, are now determined to return them to his Britannic Majesty's Commissioners in Cartridges."¹⁰²

Meanwhile, the British Army was exhausted after fighting through the winter months just to sustain themselves. While their casualties were not high, the forage wars had taken their toll on British morale. Hessian Capt. Johann Ewald praised the New Jersey militia stating, "Since the army would have been gradually destroyed through this foraging, from here on the forage was

⁹⁹ Ibid., 194.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 226.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in, Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 183.

¹⁰² Quoted in, Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 350.

procured from New York.”¹⁰³ Washington knew that the irregular force forced the British to forage with larger and larger groups, preventing the British from resting. Washington wrote to Gen. William Heath, “This would oblige them to forage, with such large covering parties, that it would in a manner harass their troops to death,” adding, “by keeping four or five hundred Men far advanced, we not only oblige them to forage with parties of 1,500 and 2,000 to cover but every now and then, give them a smart Brush.”¹⁰⁴ The British lost New Jersey and any support they hoped to gain from pacifying the region, but the consolidation of troops did allow them to supply the army throughout the winter for a cost.

General Howe’s short term solution to solve the second dilemma was to abandon the populace in New Jersey. His long-term solution was to capture Philadelphia and then worry about recapturing New Jersey once he occupied colonial capital. Howe showed that he valued protecting his force over protecting the populace because he lacked the forces to do both. Before Howe took command of the British Army in the colonies, he believed that pacifying the populace was the most important effort in bringing the colonies under British rule. Realizing that it would be difficult to win the war with soldiers alone, Howe had received early in the war permission from the king and Parliament to serve as a peace commissioner as well as commander, because he knew that he needed to rely on the goodwill of the colonies to meet the British demands.¹⁰⁵ Howe took his position as peace commissioner seriously and attempted to negotiate with some colonial leaders before he invaded Long Island.

In Howe’s mind, everything changed from the summer of 1776 to the winter of 1777 that led him to abandon what was originally his main effort, protecting the populace. The Loyalist support that he believed would help him hold on to colonial territory never materialized. The two-

¹⁰³ Quoted in, Kwasny, *Washington’s Partisan War*, 126.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *William Howe and the American War of Independence*, 87.

thirds to four-fifths of the population that was believed to be loyal was closer to ten to twenty percent, and due to their dispersion in the colonies, they lacked the ability to change the course of the war.¹⁰⁶ Howe's forces proved too small to both hold large portions of the colonies and defend themselves from the regular and irregular forces while pacifying the populace. His army was surprised three times over the course of a week and he lost momentum going into the next campaign season. Howe needed to resupply his army through the rest of the winter of 1777 and avoid any further defeats. Howe made the best decision available to him in facing the second dilemma, give up what was his second most valuable asset, the populace, and hope to gain it back after capturing Philadelphia.

The British experience during the winter of 1776-1777 showed that while they tried to protect the populace, their army was susceptible to attacks from the regular and irregular forces. This forced Howe to develop a new strategy to take Philadelphia in the spring and summer of 1777. Howe needed to consolidate his forces in the eastern border of New Jersey, closer to the British base of operations, to protect his force from any further regular army attacks. The Continental regular and irregular forces supported one another in shaping the dilemma because the regular force threat enabled the irregular force to infiltrate the areas the British left behind as well as attack British foraging parties, which required more supplies from smaller areas since they were now consolidated.

Dilemma 3 – Defeating Two Forces Simultaneously

When Howe focused on defeating both forces simultaneously, the British were unable to utilize their resources to defeat either force. Howe faced the third dilemma posed by hybrid warfare when he thought he solved the second dilemma. In order to preserve his army after defeats at Trenton and Princeton Howe needed to withdraw from New Jersey. This freed up his

¹⁰⁶ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 22.

army to focus on defeating the Continental Army, but Howe realized that if he was going to defeat the rebellion, he needed to defeat the Continental Army while also protecting the populace.

Howe changed his plans significantly from his original 1776 plan based on the actions of both the Continental Army and colonial militias. In a letter dated April 2, 1777, Howe wrote to Lord Germain of his plan for the upcoming campaign stating, “I have reason to expect in the case of success in Pennsylvania, there will be found a considerable part of the inhabitants who may be embodied as militia, and some as provincial troops, for the interior defense of the province.”¹⁰⁷ Lord Germain wrote back to Howe, agreeing that the Loyalist support would free up the army for further offensive operations, “there is every reason to expect that your success in Pennsylvania will enable you to raise from among them such a force as may be sufficient for the interior defense of the province.”¹⁰⁸ Howe’s Philadelphia campaign planning shows that he thought about defeating the Continental Army and enabling the Loyalists in Philadelphia to help secure the region. He was caught in the dilemma because he realized he did not have to force to do both. Howe believed his army could defeat the Continental Army around Philadelphia, and then the Loyalists in the region would secure the populace with support from his army.¹⁰⁹

The forage wars in the Middle Colonies had pushed the British out of New Jersey, but Washington still faced the same problem he always had: his army was not large enough to defend against a British attack or carry out any large-scale offensive operations. Washington waited in Morristown, New Jersey, in the spring of 1777, slowly building his army while planning to counter the upcoming British 1777 campaign. Washington’s dispatches to his generals during this time show that believed that Howe would with either move up the Hudson River or capture

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in, Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*, 226.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 228.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.

Philadelphia, with Washington favoring the Philadelphia course of action the most.¹¹⁰ Throughout the winter Washington petitioned Congress and the states' governments for militia reinforcements. As of February 20, 1777, Washington had around four thousand soldiers under his command, and he hoped to double the size of his army before he conducted any future operations.¹¹¹ Washington planned for both British courses of action by positioning the Continental Army at the Highlands and White Plains to prevent an attack into New Jersey and Connecticut as well as placing parts of the Continental Army along the New Jersey coast to counter a British attack on Philadelphia.¹¹²

The militia gave Washington flexibility in his plans and enabled him to shift his army to the areas that needed it the most. While the militias in New Jersey kept the British Army busy during the winter of 1777, the availability of other militias enabled Washington to shift the main element of his Continental Army to Pennsylvania while the militias took over local defenses. Washington explained the use of the militia to Gen. Jedediah Huntington stating, "Great Dependence is placed upon the spirited Exertions of the Militia of the Country as the Continental Army cannot be every Place where the Enemy are easily and quickly transported by Water."¹¹³ After the misadventures of 1776, Washington understood that his militias could not be expected to stand up against large British formations, but they could man small posts and fight against smaller British detachments.

The environment in the Middle Colonies in mid-1777 did not change as drastically as it had changed following the defeat of the British Army in Trenton and Princeton, but the opportunity, motive, and means for the regular force to work with the irregular force expanded

¹¹⁰ Freeman, *Leader of the Revolution*, 403.

¹¹¹ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 135.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 140.

¹¹³ Quoted in, *ibid.*, 185.

over the preceding six months and into the summer of 1777. The British provided the opportunity for the hybrid war to continue because Howe planned to take Philadelphia-based off of the assumption that the colonists were tired of the revolution and that a majority of the colonists were Loyalist who he could count on to secure the populace.¹¹⁴

The people's motive to resist the British were high after the previous victories on the battlefields, roads, and farmland of New Jersey. The young nation survived the British onslaught of 1776 and recent fortunes pointed to a long war that may end in a colonial victory. The British retreat and eventual expulsion from New Jersey showed the army and militias that they could win the war. The regular and irregular force had the means to continue their hybrid war. The regular and irregular forces gained experience supporting one another during the lead up to the New Jersey offensive as well as during the forage wars. These opportunities gave Washington confidence in the type of missions he could count on the militias in accomplishing.¹¹⁵

Washington's forces proved too flexible for the British to defeat during the Philadelphia Campaign. Howe wanted a decisive battle against the Continental Army, but needed to plan to defeat militias in the countryside as well. Washington's actions once he finally knew Howe's main objective was Philadelphia show how flexible his army became over the past year. Almost a month after Howe's fleet sailed into the Chesapeake Bay, Washington realized that Howe planned to land at the north end of the Chesapeake Bay and march fifty-five miles to Philadelphia.¹¹⁶ Washington's regular force was already in position to counter the British attack, he just needed to place his force between the British Army and its objective. The militias provided Washington the flexibility he needed. Over the next month and a half, the Continental Army with militia support fought the British Army at Brandywine and Germantown, losing Philadelphia in between battles.

¹¹⁴ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*, 199.

¹¹⁵ Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War*, 185.

¹¹⁶ Freeman, *Leader of the Revolution*, 447.

The British can claim victory to both battles, but more importantly, the battles proved that British Army lacked the strength to destroy the Continental Army. Losing Philadelphia to the British in 1777 was not the same as losing Philadelphia in 1776.¹¹⁷ The Revolution had taken root; no longer did seizing the capital of fledging country mean collapse. No matter how well the British fought, they could not replace their soldiers as easily as the Continental Army. Lord Germain rejected Howe's request for additional fifteen thousand soldiers, and Howe spread out his forces managing garrisons in colonies and retaining enough combat power for his Philadelphia campaign.

When Howe planned his Philadelphia Campaign, he miscalculated Loyalist support in the region to secure the populace after he defeated the Continental Army. When the British seized Philadelphia they recognized that most of the population fled and the Loyalist population was not large enough to form the provincial force they needed.¹¹⁸ After taking Philadelphia, one British officer "marveled at the so few colonists had stayed home to gain the benefits of Howe's Pardon."¹¹⁹ To make matters worse, he controlled Philadelphia, but rebels owned the countryside. Howe lacked a decisive victory over the Continental Army and enough Loyalist support to secure the region. Howe's experience in New Jersey showed him that the irregular force was a threat to his army and the populace. Without enough soldiers to defeat the Continental Army, let alone secure the populace, Howe knew his army culminated.

Howe valued his army above all else because he was not going to receive the reinforcements he needed. Howe risked his force in his Philadelphia campaign because he did have enough combat power to hold Philadelphia and defeat the Continental Army. When

¹¹⁷ Rupert Hughes, *George Washington: The Savior of the States, 1777-1781* (New York: William Morrow, 1930), 184.

¹¹⁸ Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*, 199.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in, *ibid*.

questioned by the House of Commons about his near defeat at Germantown, Howe stated, “Indeed I did not expect the Enemy to approach so soon after a defeat, but we had early notice of their Intention. I made no Works because it argues an Inferiority and was a great Fatigue to the troops...the Army was not surprised.”¹²⁰ When pressed about his inaction against the Continental Army at Valley Forge, Howe stated, “The entrenched situation of the enemy at the Valley Forge, twenty-two miles from Philadelphia, did not occasion any difficulties so pressing as to justify an attack upon that strong post during the severe weather, and though everything was prepared with that intention, I judged it imprudent, until the season should afford a prospect of reaping the advantages.”¹²¹ After failing to defeat the Continental Army in Philadelphia, realizing that there was no large Loyalist population to help him secure Pennsylvania, and coming to terms with his responsibility in Burgoyne’s defeat at Saratoga, Howe submitted his resignation to Lord Germain on October 21, 1777 and in February 1778, his wish was granted.¹²²

Howe’s campaign plan showed that he understood that the hybrid threat forced him to deal with the Continental Army and the colonial militias simultaneously. He learned his lesson while attempting to solve the previous dilemmas. Howe did not want to cross New Jersey because the first and second dilemmas showed him that his army risked attack from the regular force and that he could not secure the populace with the force he had. He chose to move to Philadelphia with the navy and avoid any colonial fortifications on the Delaware River, allowing him to use his army to defeat the Continental Army and not become bogged down fighting fortifications. Howe’s plan to use the Loyalists in Pennsylvania as a provincial force to police Philadelphia and secure the countryside showed that Howe realized his army was not large enough to protect the populace from the colonial regular force.

¹²⁰ Quoted in, Hughes, *George Washington: The Savior of the States, 1777-1781*, 190.

¹²¹ Quoted in, Anderson, *The Command of the Howe Brothers*, 299.

¹²² Gruber, *The Howe Brothers and the American Revolution*, 254. Anderson, *The Command of the Howe Brothers*, 305.

Howe tried to solve the third dilemma in the short term, but the British did not have a long-term solution. With requests for additional soldiers denied, Howe, and later Clinton, did not have the ability to solve the third dilemma. Once Howe's forces failed to destroy the Continental Army around Philadelphia and the Loyalists did not show up to support his occupying force in Pennsylvania, Howe could not carry out his campaign. After Gen. Sir Henry Clinton replaced Howe on May 24, 1777, Lord Germain helped the new commander escape the third dilemma by giving him guidance to abandon Philadelphia and put his faith in a new peace commission to end the war.¹²³ With Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga and the loss of Philadelphia, which only a year prior promised an end to the war with its capture, the British strategy for a quick war ended. Following the Battle of Yorktown, Clinton complained of the same issues that plagued Howe in leading the British war stating that Lord Germain, "never properly supported him in any of his requisitions" and that Lord Amherst had, "Thwarted him at almost everything he asked for, and interfered in many matters which no commander in chief could submit to."¹²⁴

Conclusion

Understanding the creation of the colonial hybrid threat and the dilemmas it posed to the British Army in the Middle Colonies from 1776-1778 gives insight to the types of conditions that breed hybrid threats as well as the how they work with one another to create dilemmas. General Howe's inability to understand the original conditions that led to the hybrid war as well as how those conditions changed throughout the war led him to make false assumptions in his planning process. Howe's original strategy and his changes to that strategy give insight into solving dilemmas caused by hybrid warfare. Howe valued the size of his army over all other factors in the

¹²³ Ibid., 306.

¹²⁴ William Cox, *Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 446.

American Revolution, and when he risked his losing his army to protect the populace in the first dilemma, he immediately gave up protecting the populace.

Conversely, Washington's inability to grasp the conditions that created the hybrid threat in the Middle Colonies, as well as how to best use the regular and irregular force in support of one another to create dilemmas, shows how difficult understanding your strengths and weaknesses can be. The environment that created and sustained the hybrid threat in the Middle Colonies gave Washington the opportunity to use his strengths against the enemy's weaknesses as the war continued.

Before taking command, Howe understood that he needed to defeat the Continental Army and reconcile with the populace. He did not understand that there were nowhere near as many Loyalists as some British believed to supplement his army and prevent the insurrection from spreading. Believing that the majority of colonials supported the Crown, he never appealed to the majority of Americans that wanted to stay out of the war. His army's actions in the Middle Colonies drove these colonials to support the revolution when he needed them to fight on his side. These planning assumptions led Howe to attempt to prevent the dilemmas by focusing on defeating the Continental Army and reconciling with the colonials.

Howe realized that the original British military approach to the political and social revolution was inadequate. His attempt to be both a peace commissioner and commanding general of the army, indicating that he understood the American Revolution better than the British Parliament.¹²⁵ Howe was conflicted in how to defeat the rebellion. His inability to resolve the tension between punishing the colonists and welcoming them back into British rule prevented him from solving the hybrid warfare dilemmas posed by the Americans. Howe's initial strategy to bring the colonies back under British control involved isolating New England from the Middle and Southern Colonies in order to punish the rebellious minority, gain Loyalist support in order to

¹²⁵ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 73.

bolster the British Army, defeat the Continental Army, and reconcile with the population.¹²⁶

Howe's understanding of his government's political aims aligned with his original strategy, but Howe failed to adjust his strategy based on the actions of the Continental Army and the militias.

The use of the militias for local security and reinforcing the Continental Army to attack larger British forces enabled the Americans to keep the pressure on the British Army through the dilemmas they presented. The initial American strategy was to defend the colonies and major cities through militias, an irregular force, which gave way to creating a large standing Army and defeating the British Army in a decisive battle. When it became obvious that the British Army would not be easily defeated in one decisive battle, Washington realized that the colonies would have to wear down the British Army in smaller battles, utilizing the colonial militias to fight the British through independent action and directly supporting the Continental Army in large battles.

American initiative caused the dilemma because state governments and militias sought to suppress Loyalist support before the British recognized their importance and waged a campaign to bolster Loyalist support. The British attempted to solve the dilemma by starting the New Jersey and Pennsylvania campaign, which sought to destroy the Continental Army and strangle the rebellion by controlling the Hudson River and attacking the western frontier of Massachusetts.¹²⁷ Along the way, the British intended to leverage local Loyalist support to support their campaign.

The British Army did not act quickly enough to support the Loyalist population in the Middle Colonies because the British government and commanders were preoccupied with fighting and winning a decisive battle in order to punish the rebelling colonials and bring the colonies back under British rule. Howe's actions during his 1776 campaign appear to have been contradictory to his original plan to win a quick decisive battle, but he followed his battles with

¹²⁶ Gruber, "The Origins of British Strategy in the War for American Independence," 42.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 46.

periods of inactivity, preventing the British Army from maintaining its momentum.¹²⁸ The British could have overcome the dilemmas posed by hybrid warfare through immediate action or through a war of attrition. The British Army had a limited number of soldiers to win its limited war, and at the start of the war, dedicated that small group seeking out a decisive victory in New England. Right under its nose, the middle states were suppressing the Loyalist population before they had the ability to assist the British Army in winning the war.¹²⁹

In the future, the US Army can expect to operate outside of its borders, given difficult objectives to achieve and a short amount of time to achieve those objectives. The US Army's leadership needs to understand the conditions that support a hybrid war, how to pose dilemmas to the enemy, and how to solve dilemmas in order to win in a complex world. The British did not understand the extent that the colonial governments and militias went in order to suppress the Loyalists before the British arrived in New York and had no ability to provide protection to the Loyalists dispersed throughout the Middle Colonies.¹³⁰ The British Army did not realize the scale of the revolution until it was too late to do anything about it, and when the British attempted to protect their Loyalist population, they did not have a large enough Army to do it. The Americans recognized the threat that the Loyalist posed before the war came to the New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and in doing so leveraged their irregular forces to kill, threaten, and suppress the Loyalist populace in order to keep them out of the war. With early recognition and action, the British Army may have had more success in the Middle Colonies.

¹²⁸ Smith, *William Howe and the American War of Independence*, 103.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 111.

¹³⁰ Nelson, *The American Tory*, 115.

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